

# 10 Counseling Parents of Gifted, Talented, and Creative Children

*After mastering the material in this chapter, you should be able to*

1. Define and explain the following terms and concepts:

Giftedness	Talented
Marland definition of giftedness	Creative
Renzulli definition of giftedness	Divergent
Clark definition of giftedness	thinking
2. Explain why it is important to establish helping relationships with parents of gifted, talented, and creative children.
3. Compare and contrast definitions of giftedness.
4. Understand the intellectual characteristics of the gifted.
5. Describe characteristics of the talented and creative child.
6. Identify and describe appropriate techniques or strategies used in counseling parents of intellectually gifted children.

*America's position in the world may have been reasonably secure with only a few exceptionally well-trained men and women. It is no longer.*

—A Nation at Risk

*Creative minds, the world's greatest source of social change and human welfare, are considered to be the rarest and most valuable of human characteristics.*

—Gertrude Hildreth

School-related programs and services for the gifted are now commonplace throughout the United States, but the vital role of parental support for the gifted has received scant attention. A popular—though mistaken—notion is that “the cream will rise to the top,” i.e. nothing out of the ordinary needs to be done to develop a child's gifts and talents. Marland (1972) said that we are being stripped of the comfortable notion that a bright mind will make its own way; intellectual and creative talent *cannot* survive educational neglect and apathy. A large number of gifted children do not make it on their own. Bridges (1979) notes this is chiefly because of a lack of adult interest, support, and stimulation.

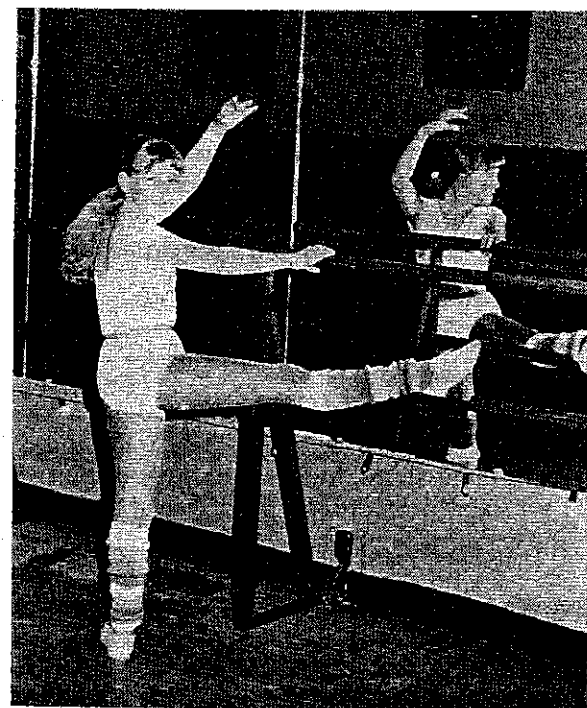
Zorman (1983) presents evidence that implies the importance of the parents' role in helping gifted children reach their emotional and intellectual potential. Parents may not know how to handle their gifted child's needs, however. Zorman questions whether parents can perform their role effectively on their own, or whether they need special guidance.

Colangelo and Zaffrann (1979) believe that counselors can effectively encourage parent involvement, and conclude by saying that the question is not *if* parents should be involved in gifted and talented programs, but rather *to what degree*.

## WHY COUNSEL PARENTS OF GIFTED CHILDREN?

The case for building and maintaining effective helping relationships with parents of the gifted is both strong and compelling. According to Swaby (1983),

the education of gifted children is receiving a great deal of national attention and interest. Not only are local school systems making significant strides in providing appropriate programs for gifted children, but many parents are also becoming sensitive to the concept of giftedness and are anxious to find out whether or not their children fit into the category of the gifted. (p. 141)



*Gifted children are a precious natural resource for a society desperately in need of creativity and inventiveness.*

Aside from the parent's own expressed interest, helping parents appreciate and understand their child's giftedness is important for two other reasons: (1) the possible loss to society, and (2) the possible loss and damage to the individual child when denied the opportunity to use gifts and talents toward individual development and self-fulfillment. The loss to society involves not only budding Einsteins and Madam Curies, but youngsters with extraordinary capacity for leadership, creative and productive thinking, and excellence in the visual and performing arts. Because of their unusual talents and intellectual ability, these children and youth will continue to shape and mold our future. The gifted are a precious natural resource—educators and parents simply cannot afford to overlook the potential of a gifted mind in a society that desperately needs creativity and inventiveness.

Besides the loss to society, possibly tragic consequences may occur when the gifted child is denied the guidance, support, and understanding vital in developing and using individual gifts and talents. Children's talents may be squandered if they are not constantly and appropriately challenged to make constructive use of these gifts and talents. Blackhurst and Berdine (1981) observe that if we believe education should help all students develop

to their full potential, we have yet another reason to provide special programs for the gifted. It would be unfair to deny these children the opportunity to become all they are capable of being. The strength and beauty of giftedness lies in helping these children and youth find meaning and purpose in their lives. Seventeen-year-old Paul R. Wetzel wrote a poem about his goals and dreams:

### *The Future and My Contribution*

The future spreads before me over the horizon,  
Waiting to be explored and tested in all directions,  
The sky spreads before a young bird.

I am so optimistic that I may be unrealistic  
Holding down the surging feeling of idealism,  
Stopping  
just short of  
becoming quixotic.

My contribution of the future will be  
the meeting of the challenge.  
I am willing to contribute my talents, and purpose  
To this certain destiny of man.

My contribution may be small, unknown;  
Fleeting in the immensity of the world.  
It may be commendable; benefiting the community.  
It may be eminent; valuable to the entire nation.  
It may be profound.

Whatever my contribution is,  
If the future is better for at least one person  
With the simpleness of smile  
Or the brilliance of ideal.

Then my challenge is met,  
My goal achieved,  
My life fulfilled.

Paul R. Wetzel  
Age 17  
Gull Lake High School  
Richland, Michigan

### **WHY INVOLVE AND COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS?**

Karnes (1976) lists five practical reasons why educators should communicate with and build effective working relationships with parents of gifted and talented youth.

1. The importance of early identification of the talented and gifted child is stressed throughout the literature. The parent with knowledge about the initial indicators of rapid development is in a strategic position to observe behavior suggestive of exceptional talents and gifts.
2. The parent is in a better position than anyone else to provide the rich, exciting, and stimulating environment in which the very young thrive prior to reaching school age.
3. Parents who become knowledgeable about the distinguishing characteristics and growth patterns of the talented and gifted can become excellent resource people when actively involved in educational programs for children who possess exceptionally high aptitudes.
4. Knowledgeable parents of the talented and gifted can become very influential leaders in promoting legislative and financial support for improved educational opportunities for their children.
5. Many parents of talented and gifted children pursue a wide range of interesting careers and are thus in a position to demonstrate career models and assist in increasing alternatives about which children learn as they develop. (p. 6)

Finally, helpers should reach out and communicate with these parents simply because they know more about their child than anyone else and will reach them longer than anyone else. As soon as a child is identified as gifted, counseling should be made available in the school or at home. From their experience in working with parents of gifted children, Colangelo and Dettmann (1983) report that these parents are usually highly motivated to contribute to the education of their children. Educators should capitalize on this motivation. Congdon (1979) stresses the importance of parental involvement by stating that

when we discuss gifted or talented children we tend to concentrate on the subject of how to identify them, which is important, and how to provide for their formal education, which is also important. But in the past, too little stress has been given to the subject of advising, influencing, and supporting the parents of these children. Ultimately, this may well be the crucial factor in their future happiness and success. (pp. 348-349)

## WHAT CONSTITUTES GIFTEDNESS?

It is somewhat difficult to pinpoint an exact definition of giftedness. Carter and Kontos (1982) point out this problem by stating that

many in the field of gifted education treat the concept of giftedness as something tangible, a trait that is easily observed. On the contrary, giftedness is a highly abstract concept, or construct, created by scholars to summarize the common characteristics of a select group of people. Unfortunately, there is wide disagreement over the set of characteristics that define the construct of giftedness. Yet individuals use the same term to refer to a different set of characteristics. This practice has led to much confusion about the nature and identification of giftedness. (p. 17)

In spite of the lack of agreement about what constitutes giftedness, to assist parents you need to know as much as possible about the nature and general characteristics of giftedness. Developing a definition of giftedness is important; it usually determines who will be admitted to programs and what educational approaches will be used. As Kauffman and Hallahan (1981) observe, the definition of the term *gifted* in the United States has evolved from a focus on intellectual ability (measured by intelligence tests) to a focus on not only general intellectual abilities, but specific abilities and talents as well. More recent definitions of giftedness have included a much broader range of talents and abilities. In this chapter, we will discuss three representative definitions of giftedness.

### *The Marland or "Federal" Definition*

One way to illustrate giftedness is by examining a significant piece of federal legislation, Public Law 91-230 (1970), often called the "Marland Report" after S. P. Marland, the U.S. Commissioner of Education at that time. PL 91-230 directed a comprehensive study to determine if special programs are necessary to meet the needs of gifted and talented children. Among other directives, PL 91-230 stated that the Commissioner of Education shall define "gifted and talented" for purposes of Federal education programs. The advisory panel of gifted education authorities arrived at a definition that illustrates the expanding concept of giftedness. The definition established by the advisory panel reads as follows:

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated education programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society. (Marland, p. 2)

Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any or all of the following areas:

1. General intellectual ability
2. Specific academic aptitude
3. Creative or productive thinking
4. Leadership ability
5. Visual and performing arts
6. Psychomotor ability. (Marland, p. 2)

Note that the 1970 report of the U.S. Commissioner of Education states that a conservative estimate of gifted and talented elementary and secondary school children ranges between 1.5 and 2.5 million children out of 51.6 million. The gifted, therefore, constitute a sizeable portion of our exceptional child population.

The impact of this report is significant—a number of states and local school systems have adopted either this definition or a very similar one as the basis for identification, placement, and educational programming (Karnes and Collins, 1977).

The most recent definition used in federal law was the result of the Gifted and Talented Children's Act of 1978 (PL 95-561, Section 902) that defined the gifted as follows:

Gifted and talented children means children and wherever applicable, youth, who are identified at the preschool, elementary, or secondary level as possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of high performance capabilities in areas such as intellectual, creative, specific academic, or leadership ability, or in the performing and visual arts, and who by reason thereof, require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school.

Kauffman and Hallahan (1981) mention that this 1978 federal legislation modified the definition slightly by eliminating psychomotor ability as an area of talent, clearly specifying the need for early identification, and emphasizing the need for differential programming.

### ***The Renzulli Definition***

Another definition of giftedness has been developed by Joseph S. Renzulli. Because of some major problems he saw with the U.S. Office of Education definition, Renzulli (1978) researched creative/productive people and found that persons who have achieved recognition because of their unique accomplishments and creative contributions possess a relatively well-defined set of three interlocking traits. These traits are above average, though not necessarily superior, general ability; task commitment; and creativity. Renzulli emphasizes that each trait is of equal weight; it is the interaction among the three clusters or traits that is the necessary ingredient for creative/productive accomplishment. Renzulli concluded his reexamination of giftedness by stating his own definition:

Giftedness consists of an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits—these clusters being above average general abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity. Gifted and talented children are those possessing or capable of developing this composite set of traits and applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance. Children who manifest or are capable of developing an interaction among the three clusters require a wide variety of educational opportunities and services that are not ordinarily provided through regular instructional programs. (p. 261)

### ***The Clark Definition***

Citing new research in brain/mind function, Clark (1983) suggests a different definition for giftedness. Intelligence can no longer be confined to cognitive

function, but must include all the functions of the brain and their efficient and integrated use. Clark offers the following definition of giftedness:

Giftedness is a biologically rooted concept, a label for a high level of intelligence that results from the advanced and accelerated integration of functions within the brain, including physical sensing, emotions, cognition, and intuition. Such advanced and accelerated function may be expressed through abilities such as those involved in cognition, creativity, academic aptitude, leadership, or the visual and performing arts. Therefore, with this definition of intelligence, gifted individuals are those who are performing, or who show promise of performing, at high levels of intelligence. Because of such advanced or accelerated development, these individuals require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools in order to develop their capability more fully. (p. 6)

Examining the Marland, Renzulli, and Clark definitions of giftedness illustrates the complexity of the problem. Each definition (and any other broad definition) covers a wide range of abilities and traits; however, helpers who counsel parents of the gifted need an in-depth understanding of all these definitions.

## ***INTELLECTUAL (COGNITIVE) CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GIFTED***

Lists of characteristics of gifted children abound in the literature. One of the most useful and recent listings was developed by Clark (1983). These cognitive characteristics consist of the following:

- ☐ Extraordinary quantity of information: unusual retentiveness
- ☐ Advanced comprehension
- ☐ Unusually varied interests and curiosity
- ☐ High level of language development
- ☐ High level of verbal ability
- ☐ Unusual capacity for processing information
- ☐ Accelerated pace of thought processes
- ☐ Flexible thought processes
- ☐ Comprehensive synthesis
- ☐ Early ability to delay closure
- ☐ Heightened capacity for seeing unusual and diverse relationships
- ☐ Ability to generate original ideas and solutions
- ☐ Early differential patterns for thought processing (e.g., thinking in alternatives, abstract terms, sensing consequences, making generalizations)
- ☐ Early ability to use and form conceptual frameworks
- ☐ An evaluative approach to themselves and others
- ☐ Persistent goal-directed behavior (p. 195)

After analyzing the learning style preferences of the gifted, Griggs (1984) suggests six characteristics associated with gifted and talented students: independent (self-learners), internally controlled, persistent,

ceptually strong, nonconforming, and highly motivated. A knowledge of general characteristics can be helpful to those who counsel the gifted child, as Griggs states, "the counselor's role as a consultant to teachers and parents can support the student's independence and help adults deal effectively with patterns of self-reliance" (p. 429).

## THE TALENTED AND CREATIVE CHILD

To provide a complete discussion of giftedness, we should also mention those children who are talented and creative. The term *talented* is often used to denote a special ability or aptitude in areas such as art, music, drama, athletics. Blackhurst and Berdine (1981) stress the distinction between *giftedness* and *talent* by saying that although many talented children have high general intelligence, others show only average intellectual or creative ability. Blackhurst and Berdine also suggest that children with special talent in one area may need extra guidance to stimulate interest in other subjects and areas.

## HELPING PARENTS TO RECOGNIZE AND ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF TALENT AND CREATIVITY

Livinghurst (1957) suggests that only about half of the most able 20 percent of gifted children actually develop their abilities to a point where they make an important contribution to society. Why doesn't the other half develop their talents more fully? Perhaps it is because those with underdeveloped talent are persons whose environments have been least favorable to producing high-level ability. Children from low-status families often fail to develop their abilities because of a lack of opportunity and stimulation. Of course, this may also hold true for families from upper socioeconomic levels. The quality of life at home, the nature of parent guidance and controls, as well as life in the neighborhood all influence the gifted child's intellectual, social, and emotional development. The parents set the example for the young child's growth and responsibilities more than any other influence. You as a counselor must offer parents concrete suggestions to encourage an optimum home environment. Many traditional failings of the gifted child are due largely to poor guidance and management; this can be counteracted by taking certain precautions in home training. In many instances, parents are overprotective or overanxious, and the counselor must help them overcome their undue concern so that the child can gain more confidence. The child who has understanding and supportive parents working with teachers is more likely to reach goals and make a contribution to self and society.

Creativity, in contrast to talent, has been called "the highest expres-

sion of giftedness" and is a very special condition, attitude, or state of being that is difficult to define (Clark, 1983). Citing the earlier works of J. P. Guilford, Torrance (1965) states that creative thinking refers to such abilities as fluency (large number of ideas), flexibility (variety of different approaches or categories of ideas), originality (unusual, off-the-beaten-track ideas), elaboration (well-developed and detailed ideas), sensitivity to defects and problems, and redefinition (perceiving in a way different from the usual, established, or intended way or use.) Parke (1985) comments that "Research studies indicate that factors commonly associated with creativity, such as fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration, can be encouraged, contrary to the once popular belief that either you have it or you don't. Over the past thirty years, studies have consistently shown that training has a measurable positive effect on creative production" (p. 378).

Torrance (1970) defines creativity in a broader sense by referring to it as becoming sensitive to or aware of problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, and disharmonies; bringing existing information together in new relationships, defining the difficulty of identifying the missing elements, searching for solutions, making guesses, or formulating hypotheses about the problems or deficiencies; testing and retesting them; and finally, communicating the results.

Divergent thinking has been called the keystone to creativity. It may be described as using knowledge in new ways to produce new solutions. Creative thinking requires the individual to supply new formulations or new hypotheses and imagine the possible consequences of untried solutions. By contrast, convergent thinking is recalling the already learned information and fitting it to new situations in a more or less mechanical way. Kirk and Gallagher (1983) suggest that two high-level thinking processes, divergent production and evaluation, are important for educators of the gifted because they are not often measured in standard intelligence tests. Table 3.1 illustrates how different thinking processes can be encouraged by different types of questions asked in a discussion of "Hamlet."

TABLE 3.1 Questions to encourage different types of thinking processes

Operation	Example
Memory	Whom did Hamlet kill by mistake?
Convergent thinking	Explain why Hamlet rejected Ophelia.
Divergent thinking	Name some other ways Hamlet might have accomplished his goals.
Evaluative thinking	Was Hamlet justified in killing his uncle?

SOURCE: From *Teaching the gifted child*, 2nd ed. (p. 238) by J. Gallagher, 1975, Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Using his research on the background and traits of high and low achievers, Williams (1982) stresses that creativity development at home and in school depends on attempts made in both places to enhance such human potential. Williams offers some specific suggestions for parents and teachers to help develop more highly functioning, creative individuals for later life:

1. Both home and school should be responsive and expressive places for children. Stretch and expand places where their becoming more creative has a chance to burst forth.
2. The home and school both should encourage self-resourcefulness. Demand and expect children to do things, to produce things on their own.
3. Parents and teachers alike should recognize, respect, and give emotional support to children for questions, and unusual thinking that displays their attitudes and feelings. Listen very carefully to children's ideas and thoughts.
4. Adults rearing children at home and teachers guiding children in school must expect and allow for comfortable regression in growth patterns. Teach them to accept mistakes, but capitalize upon them; to laugh at themselves, turning humor into serious productions.
5. Both teachers and parents should provide balance between interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences for children. There must be times when they should join others.
6. Well-defined standards of discipline and conduct must persist both at home and in school. There should be only a few rules both at home and in school, but those that exist must be well-defined, understood, and seldom infringed upon.
7. Home as well as school must recognize differences between ability and performance. There should not be criticism nor negative feedback which deflates or discourages a child regardless of his or her ability.
8. Parents and teachers must trust children. Making decisions and having choices to do what is reasonable in a responsible way must be given to all children. Trust can best be built by noticing positive ways children operate in spite of all the obstacles they face. (pp. 2-6)

### ISSUES AND CONCERNS IN COUNSELING PARENTS OF INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED CHILDREN

So far we have dealt almost exclusively with assisting parents of talented and creative children, but we should also explore some of the significant issues in counseling parents of the intellectually gifted child. From this point on in the discussion, *the gifted* will refer to those children and youth with achievement or potential in general intellectual ability.

Telford and Sawrey (1972) discuss some of the issues that parents of gifted children may face. They state:

The parents of the gifted need help in understanding the extent and nature of their child's superiority. They often require assistance in accepting the fact of the child's status without excessive anxiety or pride. They need to be aware

of the possibilities and dangers of exploiting the child's cleverness on the one hand, and of neglecting or rejecting him on the other. Rejection and favoritism, either of the gifted child or of his less gifted siblings, are always possibilities. Sometimes the superior child is favored because he can be exploited for parental glory, and his less favored siblings are neglected; less often, he may be neglected because his parents believe that he can look out for himself and therefore needs less than the others. Sometimes neglect of the superior child results from parental attempts to somehow compensate the more normal siblings for their lack of giftedness. (p. 120)

Congdon (1979) has identified several issues that he feels are important in helping parents of gifted children. These are summarized in Table 10.2.

**TABLE 10.2** *Summary of Congdon's principles of helping parents of gifted children*

Issue/Concern	Parents Role and Comment
Early identification	The parents' role is crucial; early formative years will lay the foundations for future development.
Discourage over-reaction	Above all, parents should refrain from changing their whole attitude toward the child.
Reassurance	Parents of a gifted child often need reassurance. They may be convinced that they themselves are inferior to the child and will be unable to cope.
Responsibility to the child	Parents need to realize their responsibility towards their child. A happy and settled home environment means more to the gifted child than any other single factor.
Respect for the child	Respect is essential for every child, but it is particularly important when trying to understand the gifted.
Avoiding over-concentration on the gifted child	Parents should avoid over-concentrating on their gifted child to the exclusion of siblings. Make an equal number of comments about the non-gifted child.
Avoid pressuring the gifted child	The best preparation for adulthood is to have lived fully as a child. There are times when children want to play and act like other children and they should be allowed to do so.
Time and space for the gifted child	There is no better investment than to put time aside for the gifted child, but it

TABLE 10.2, continued)

Issue/Concern	Parents Role and Comment
Time and space for the gifted child	should be made clear that there are periods during the day when patience is required of the child.
Language development	It is important that parents talk <i>with</i> rather than <i>to</i> the child. Encourage the child's curiosity and respond to questions.
Variability within the group	Although gifted children as a group have many common characteristics, parents should be aware of the high degree of variability they can exhibit.
Parental interest in school	It is essential that parents take an interest in the child's school whether or not the child is gifted.
Sexual stereotyping	The most tragic loss in an educational system may be that of gifted girls.

Parents have tremendous influence regarding their gifted child's social, emotional, and intellectual development. It is important that parents understand the nature, needs, and characteristics of their gifted children to develop their child's self-concept and to open communication within the family. Coleman (1982) notes that parenting a gifted child is similar to parenting a child of average intelligence, but added stress appears when trying to accept a creative child's unique value system, to cope with school discipline problems arising from the child's boredom, and to let the child decide on and map his or her own future. It is within these problem areas that you can help parents of the gifted the most.

Colangelo and Dettmann (1983) have summarized a review of parents and families of gifted children as follows:

1. There is a great need to do more experimental research and to replicate studies concerning parent and gifted child interaction.
2. Parents can play an important role in the identification and educational development of their gifted children.
3. Parents, in general, are confused about their own gifted children. This confusion results from being unprepared to raise an "exceptional" child and from having insufficient knowledge on the nature of giftedness and creativity.
4. Parents are uncertain about their role with the schools. It seems the most promising practices occurred when parents became more active partners with the school.
5. Characteristics of achievement and creativity seem to be related to specific characteristics of parents and the home environment.



*Parents must understand their responsibilities to their gifted children.*

6. Gifted children pose challenges and problems to parents that are different from those of other children. Our review indicated that educators are not always aware of these possibilities and have not provided parents specific direction for dealing with them. (p. 26)

In an article entitled "Our Gifted and Talented: What Are Their Needs and What Can We Do?", Weiner (1981) stresses the idea that talent must be preserved and nurtured:

Studies of gifted children continually indicate that this group has problems that require assistance. A gifted child, like any other, can founder in a morass of failure, frustration, and maladjustment. He or she can be left rudderless, restless, and unfulfilled, his or her great gifts lost to society. How many millions of persons in the eons of time must have shown great promise? How pitifully few of these found fulfillment! How many of this group survived because of the intervention of an interested concerned person? Marconi's mother found

her son space in the attic to work with his wires and contrivances when his rigid, intolerant father, having failed to force him into a military life, wrote him off as a failure. Churchill's English master imbued him with a love of language and the magic of words when he had been excused from Latin and Greek because he was a dullard. Einstein's uncle aroused his interest in mathematics, after he had nearly flunked in elementary school, by teaching him mathematical games and puzzles. The headmaster of Handel's small town school got him musical instruction despite his father's vehement objection to his son's having piano lessons.

Consider the children we have examined here. Who will intervene on behalf of Eric, whose social adjustment is so poor it has ostracized him from peers and teachers? Who will help Matt, who cannot withstand the continued pressure from his father to become his prototype? What about Jim, whose teacher turned him away from mathematics in the second grade when she punished him for taking his book home in the fall of the year and working out all the problems over the weekend? What will become of Karen, brilliant, musically talented, who despises her teachers as being stupid and weeps in agonized frustration because she has no friends?

These findings unmistakably refute the myth that gifted children not only have no problems but can make it on their own. There is also the ample evidence that many eminent persons and their gifts would have been lost to use without the supportive intervention of a concerned mentor. Parents and teachers are in a logical position to provide mentorships when needed by gifted children and thus assure self-fulfillment and societal enrichment. (p. 30)

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

Gifted children need the attention that any child needs, but they are also entitled to educational experiences that will recognize and nurture their unique potential to contribute to self and society. As we strive toward this goal, parents and educators have a distinct responsibility to create an environment that will best guide, direct, and help the gifted child fulfill the highest possible levels of intellectual, emotional, and social growth. Those who counsel parents of the gifted must not only be knowledgeable of the nature and characteristics of giftedness, they must share these insights to assist parents to face the special challenges in bringing up their gifted offspring. In particular, parents must be helped to understand giftedness so that their child's intellectual development matches or his or her abilities.

The role of the counselor may be to provide the parents with short-term and direct information when they ask questions such as, "How can I go about getting my child admitted to school early? How do I explain giftedness to my child in order to make him feel more comfortable about being different?" Counseling may be more complex when the parent asks if a gifted child has a different way of learning than other children or if the parent wants to help the child find the best possible style of learning.

Regardless of the question or concern, the helper's responsibility is to provide information or suggest appropriate action steps to parents. They in turn will be well-informed and can adopt effective parenting practices to guide and direct their gifted child's total development. With proper help and guidance, parents can create favorable conditions and can model behavior and attitudes that will stimulate curiosity, exploration, experimentation, questioning, and self-directed learning to create a foundation for nurturing the child's intellectual and creative growth.

Colangelo and Zaffrann (1979) suggest five specific ways that counselors and helpers can assist parents of gifted children. As you review their list, think about your own qualifications, competencies, and counseling skills.

- ☐ Provide *understanding* to parents who may feel bewildered, frustrated, guilty, or threatened about raising a gifted child.
- ☐ Provide *information* about common characteristics of gifted children; about available programs, materials, and facilities; or about referral sources.
- ☐ Provide *advocacy, action, and support* for parent and family programs in schools.
- ☐ Help *initiate* parents' groups that can meet for information, for action, or simply for exchanging perceptions and feelings.
- ☐ Share *information* with the parents about their children, and facilitate family communication *by* the family *about* the family. (pp. 393-394)

Finally, Feldhusen and Kroll (1985) comment:

The United States is faced with a variety of economic, political, and social crises which seem to call for new insights, creative problem solving, and new talent. To ignore or neglect the educational needs of the gifted student is not only shortsighted but also undermines the development of this country's most precious natural resources. (p. 252)

## ACTIVITIES, EXERCISES, AND IDEAS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Survey your school system to determine services provided for gifted children. Are they adequate? What types of services *should* be provided?
2. Interview the parents of a gifted child. What types of problems, concerns, and special challenges did or does their gifted child present to them? Was counseling available if and when they needed it?
3. Write or contact the Association for the Gifted (TAG) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) for information about their purposes, goals, membership, and meetings. What are the similarities and differences in these organizations? How might parents of a gifted child profit from membership in these organizations?



## REFERENCES

4. How would you go about initiating and organizing a parent group dedicated to the understanding, advancement, and appropriate educational programming of gifted children?
5. Discuss differences in the way a counselor would work with parents of the gifted child as opposed to working with parents of handicapped children. Are the counseling skills and processes essentially the same? If not, how do they differ?
6. Why is it important for parents not to exaggerate their child's superiority or make him unduly conscious of it? What course of action can they take in this respect?
7. How might the counselor assist parents to listen to their gifted child with more insight and understanding?
8. It has been said that the gifted are, in fact, our most handicapped population because of the lack of available services and programs. Do you agree or disagree? What reasons can you offer to support your view?
9. Do you have a broad or narrow view of what constitutes giftedness? How might your own personal definition affect a counseling relationship with parents?
10. (a) You have been asked to present a program to a group of parents of gifted children and your talk is entitled, "Understanding and Nurturing Your Child's Giftedness." What specific issues, topics, or points would you focus on and discuss with this parent group? Is there one point or idea that you would emphasize? Why?
- (b) At the conclusion of your presentation, one parent angrily says, "I'm opposed to the idea of giftedness and gifted programs because they are not democratic and they encourage an elitist concept by giving special treatment to a select few." How would you respond to this accusation?

## REFERENCES

- Ackhurst, E. A., & Berdine, W. H. (1981). *An introduction to special education*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Bridges, S. A. (1979). The gifted child in the family. In J. J. Gallagher (Ed.), *Gifted children: Reaching their potential* (pp. 333-346). Jerusalem, Israel: Kollek & Son.
- Porter, K. R., & Kontos, S. (1982). An application of cognitive-developmental theory to the identification of gifted children. *Roeper Review*, 5(2), 17-20.
- Mark, B. (1983). *Growing up gifted* (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.
- Blangelo, N., & Dettman, D. F. (1983). A review of research on parents and families of gifted children. *Exceptional Children*, 50, 20-27.
- Blangelo, N., & Zaffrann, R. T. (Eds.). (1979). *New voices in counseling the gifted*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Sleeman, D. (1982, March/April). Parenting the gifted: Is this a job for superparent? *G/C/T*, 22, 47-50.
- Angdon, P. J. (1979). Helping parents of gifted children. In J. J. Gallagher (Ed.), *Gifted children: Reaching their potential* (pp. 347-363). Jerusalem, Israel: Kollek & Son.

- Feldhusen, J. F., & Kroll, M. D. (1985). Parent perceptions of gifted children's educational needs. *Roeper Review*, 7(4), 249-252.
- Griggs, S. A. (1984). Counseling the gifted based on learning styles. *Exceptional Children*, 50(5), 429-432.
- Havinghurst, R. H. (1957). Conditions favorable and detrimental to the development of talent. *School Review*, 65(1), 20-26.
- Karnes, F. A. (1976). For and about parents. *Talents and Gifts: The Official Journal of the Association for the Gifted*, 18, 8.
- Karnes, F. A., & Collins, E. (1977). Teacher certification in gifted education: A national survey. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 21, 204-207.
- Kauffman, J. M., & Hallahan, D. P. (Eds.). (1981). *Handbook of special education*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kirk, S. A., & Gallagher, J. J. (1983). *Educating exceptional children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Marland, S. P. (1972). *Education of the gifted and talented: Report to the Congress of the United States by the U.S. Commissioner of Education*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Parke, B. N. (1985). Methods of creativity. In R. H. Swassing, *Teaching gifted children and adolescents* (pp. 376-401). Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.
- Renzulli, J. S. (1978). What makes giftedness? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 60(3), 180-184, 261.
- Swaby, B. (1983). Questions parents ask about reading and the gifted. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 15(3), 141-143.
- Telford, C. W., & Sawrey, J. M. (1972). *The exceptional individual*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Torrance, E. P. (1965). *Gifted children in the classroom*. New York: MacMillan.
- Torrance, E. P. (1970). *Encouraging creativity in the classroom*. (Dubuque, IA: Brown.
- Weiner, A. (1981). Our gifted and talented: What are their needs and what can we do? In B. S. Miller & E. M. Price (Eds.), *The gifted child, the family, and the community* (pp. 27-31). New York: The American Association for Gifted Children: Walker.
- Wetzel, P. R. (1981). The future and my contribution. In B. S. Miller & E. M. Price (Eds.), *The gifted child, the family, and the community* (pp. 188-189). New York: The American Association for Gifted Children: Walker.
- Williams, F. E. (1982). Developing children's creativity at home and in the school. *G/C/T*, 24, 2-6.
- Zorman, R.. (1982). Parents do make a difference. *Roeper Review*, 5(2), 41-43.

## SELECTED REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING AND STUDY

- Alvino, J. (1981, November/December). Guidance for the gifted. *Instructor*, 64-66.
- Anthony, S. (1982). Suggestions to 'turn on' bright children at home. *G/C/T*, 25, 22.

- Ballering, L. D., & Koch, A.** (1984). Family relations when a child is gifted. *Gifted Children Quarterly*, 28(3), 140-143.
- Bloom, B. S.** (1982). The role of gifts and markers in the development of talent. *Exceptional Children*, 48(6), 510-522.
- Chapey, G. D., & Trimarco, T. A.** (1984). Participation of parents in programs for the gifted in New York City. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 7(3), 178-191.
- Colangelo, N., & Dettman, D. F.** (1981). A conceptual model of four types of parent-school interactions. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 5(2), 120-126.
- Dettman, D. F., & Colangelo, N.** (1980). A functional model for counseling parents of gifted students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 24(4), 158-161.
- Goleman, D.** (1980). 1,528 little geniuses and how they grew: The gifted children of the Terman study, 60 years later. *Psychology Today*, 13(9), 28-43.
- Gogel, E. M., & McCumsey, J.** (1983). What parents are saying. *G/C/T*, 26, 52-54.
- Hayes, D. G., & Levitt, M.** (1982). Stress: an inventory for parents. *G/C/T*, 24, 8-12.
- Hunt, N.** (1983). Creative parenting. *G/C/T*, 28, 30-31.
- Johnson, T. F.** (1985). Helping the gifted child adjust to the outside world. *G/C/T*, 38, 30-33.
- Karnes, M. B.** (1984). Special children . . . Special gifts. *Children Today*, 13(5), 18-23.
- Karnes, M. B., Shwedel, A. M., & Lewis, G. F.** (1983). Long-term effects of early programming for the gifted/talented handicapped. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 6(4), 266-278.
- Lalbow, R. E.** (1981). An open letter to parents of extremely gifted youngsters. *G/C/T*, 17, 23-25.
- Lyon, H. C.** (1980). Our most neglected natural resource. *Today's Education*, 70(1), 15GS-20GS.
- Mathews, F. N.** (1981). Effective communication with parents of the gifted and talented: Some suggestions for improvement. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 6(3), 207-210.
- Mathews, F. N.** (1981). Influencing parents' attitudes toward gifted education. *Exceptional Children*, 48(2), 140-143.
- Moore, N. D.** (1982). The joys and challenges in raising a gifted child. *G/C/T*, 25, 8-11.
- Roeper, A.** (1982). How the gifted cope with their emotions. *Roeper Review*, 5(2), 21-23.
- Ross, A., & Parker, M.** (1980). Academic and social self-concepts of the academically gifted. *Exceptional Children*, 47(1), 6-11.
- Schetky, D. H.** (1981). The emotional and social development of the gifted child: Psychiatrist looks at giftedness. *G/C/T*, 18, 2-4.
- Swayer, R. N.** (1984). Advice for parents: Open doors, show love, relax. *Psychology Today*, 18(6), 36.

- Whitmore, J. R.** (1981). Gifted children with handicapping conditions. *Exceptional Children*, 48(2), 106-114.
- Wolf, J. S., & Stephens, T. M.** (1984). Training models for parents of the gifted. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 7(2), 120-129.

### SELECTED JOURNALS/NEWSLETTERS IN GIFTED EDUCATION

In particular situations you may need additional information about gifted, talented, and creative children. There are many national, regional, state, and local organizations that can be of assistance to you, as well as newsletters and journals. The following is a partial list of these:

*G/C/T* is a bi-monthly magazine for parents and teachers of Gifted, Creative, and Talented Children. For subscription information write:

*G/C/T* Publishing Co., Inc.  
P.O. Box 6448  
Mobile, AL 36660

*The Gifted Children Newsletter*, published monthly, is primarily intended for the parents of children with great promise. Write for information to:

Gifted Children Newsletter  
P.O. Box 7200  
Bergenfield, NJ 07621

*The Roeper Review*, published quarterly, focuses on the philosophical, moral, and academic issues that relate to the lives and experiences of the gifted and talented. It presents various positions and approaches relating to these issues and translates them into practice in the home, school, and community. For information write:

The Roeper Review  
Roeper City and County School  
P.O. Box 329  
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) seeks to further the education of the gifted and to enhance the child's potential creativity. Members receive *The Gifted Child Quarterly*. Write or contact:

The National Association for Gifted Children  
5100 North Edgewood Drive  
St. Paul, MN 55112

The American Association for Gifted Children (AAGC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging the optimal development of gifted

and talented children and youth, particularly through the family and community. For further information, write or contact:

The American Association for Gifted Children  
15 Gramercy Park  
New York, NY 10003

The Association for the Gifted (TAG) is a division of the Council for Exceptional Children whose members include teachers, administrators, and others interested in gifted and talented children. Their quarterly publication is entitled *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*. For further information, write or contact:

The Council for Exceptional Children  
1920 Association Drive  
Reston, VA 22091

AJ  
Se  
R  
—

JC

F  
C

I

I